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ABSTRACT

Criticisms of foreign student and international programs at U.S. colleges and universities are reviewed, along with the efforts by higher education institutions to examine their foreign student programs. Bills before the U.S. Congress that would affect these programs are also briefly described. Some criticisms reflect the view that efforts to attract foreign students should be curtailed. Some of the concerns pertain to U.S. business and foreign industrial competition and the fact that many highly-skilled foreign scientists and technicians were trained in U.S. colleges and universities. Others object to the alleged favoritism that universities accord foreign students in admissions and financial assistance. Additionally, the new xenophobia can be seen in the efforts of the federal government to restrict the access of foreign students and scholars to certain types of information and research on U.S. campuses. Self-examinations by colleges have resulted in: (1) programs to assure a diversity of foreign student enrollments, (2) task forces on international education, (3) additional support services, (4) improved language testing for applicants, and (5) cultural awareness projects. Bills being considered include: a foreign assistance bill to finance scholarships for education programs in this country, funds for foreign language instruction for U.S. students at all educational levels, and funds for advanced research and training in Soviet and Eastern European studies. (SW)

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EDUCATION FOR FOREIGNERS -- AND AMERICANS

It has been about a year-and-a-half since I last had an opportunity to participate in a NAFSA Convention, and in all sincerity, it is good to be back among colleagues who share one's sentiments about international education in general and foreign student programs in particular.

As is often the case when old colleagues see one another again, the conversation quickly turns to what has transpired since the last get-together. In this instance, I suggest that the past eighteen months or so have brought about several noteworthy, although dubious, developments. These developments represent both "good news" and "bad news" for supporters of international education activities. Simply stated, the good news is that many of our efforts are receiving more public attention than they have ever enjoyed. The bad news is that much of this attention is downright negative. In other words, people are talking about us, even if they are not saying entirely nice things.

And what are they saying? Well, it depends upon whom you want to listen to. On the one hand, a growing number of Americans have voiced what I consider to be alarmingly xenophobic views over recent years. Disillusioned by Viet Nam, held hostage by the Ayatollah, frustrated by the Japanese, and threatened by the Russian bear, these citizens have become suspicious, if not intolerant, of anyone or anything that is foreign. They are cautious, mistrustful, and most of all, critical.

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Among the targets of their criticism are America's colleges and universities. For years, our campuses have attracted scholars and students from around the world, providing career training, research opportunities, and hopefully some insight on just what "America, The Land of the Free" is all about. The New Xenophobes want to change that. They argue that our higher educational institutions have done too good a job in attracting international students. In short, people like you have created too many opportunities for foreigners, opportunities that will allegedly haunt America in future years. And in the eyes of our critics, the only solution is to reduce the 325,000 student visas that the U.S. currently grants.

The specific criticisms leveled against our programs vary from the mundane to the noteworthy. In their most benign form, the complaints are little more than accusations that American colleges recruit too many "Canucks" for our hockey teams, too many soccer-style kickers for our football teams, and too many Phi Slamma Jamma dunk artists for our basketball teams.

A more serious form of criticism takes issue with the alleged favoritism that universities and colleges accord foreign students. There is, for example, inevitable disgruntlement whenever an institution admits a foreign student into a professional program but rejects a local student. Similar complaints are raised whenever State residents are bypassed in favor of foreign students for teaching or research assistantships, especially when the language skills of the foreign students prove to be less than desirable. And, of course, whenever foreign students take to the streets and demonstrate against U.S. policies, there are bound to be outraged citizens who tell the students, "If you don't like it here, go back where you came from," and who tell college presidents, "Kick those ingrates off campus."

A third and even more serious form of criticism focuses upon the eroding competitive position of the U.S. in the world marketplace and the role that colleges and universities play in training foreign competitors. A number of corporate leaders, whom I respect and otherwise consider to be rational and clear-thinking businessmen, are genuinely alarmed by the complicity of American higher education in the development of international competition.

They point out that the U.S. has lost 23 percent of its foreign markets over the past decade to foreign industrial competition. They note that some 35 percent of all U.S. patents now go to foreign scientists and corporations. They cite the loss of markets in steel, shipbuilding, autos, stereos, televisions and other big ticket items. The loss of our competitive edge, they argue, is not merely a function of lower labor costs, but rather of more highly-skilled foreign scientists and technicians, many of whom were trained in U.S. colleges and universities.

These businessmen are afraid, and not only do they occasionally refuse to permit foreign students to tour their research facilities, but they also want to turn off the valve that supplies the skilled expertise to their foreign competitors. In short, they don't want today's breakthrough to end up in a Tokyo laboratory tomorrow, and they don't want U.S. colleges and universities to aid and abet the international competition.

A fourth strain of the new xenophobia can be seen in the efforts of the federal government to restrict the access of foreign students and scholars to certain types of information and research on our campuses. Typically, such restrictions are aimed at Soviet, Chinese, or Eastern Bloc visitors who are

viewed as potential threats to the military or technological secrets of this country. As one Pentagon spokesman explained the policy, we want "to control the unauthorized release of technology to our adversaries" and to develop "reciprocity, restricting Soviet scientists in the way that American scientists are restricted in the Soviet Union." Thus, some college administrators have received letters from the U.S. State Department that not only encourage the close monitoring of foreign students, but that also suggest university officials gumshoe their international visitors from the science center to the student union.

There are, of course, any number of other examples that one might cite as further evidence of the criticisms I briefly outlined. And I'm sure that each of you has a personal war story illustrating still other complaints about our international education and foreign student programs. But the bottom line in such criticisms is that some people feel that our efforts to attract foreign students should be curtailed. In other words, as I mentioned earlier, there is a sense that our programs have been too successful.

Ironically, there is another camp of critics who argue just the opposite -- namely, that American universities and colleges have not done enough in the foreign student arena. Certainly, that is the bottom line in a recent report from the Institute for International Education called Absence of Decision. The title of the publication reflects the view, to quote one New York Times reviewer, that "The treatment of foreign students by American colleges and universities is in a state of chaos created by ignorance, prejudice, and the absence of planning."

To be criticized for both doing too much and for doing too little is no small feat, even for universities that are accustomed to be whipsawed on any number of issues. As is often the case, the truth as to our success or the shortcomings lies somewhere between the two camps. Admittedly, American higher education has not developed the full range of foreign student programs that are essential to the welfare of this country, if not the future of the world. However, this shortfall is not, in my view, prompted by the ignorance, prejudice, or absence of planning on the part of universities and colleges. Instead, its origins lie outside the boundaries of our campuses.

Bluntly stated, foreign student and international programs are not alluring items in the eyes of federal decision makers who determine much of the funding for our activities. The Fulbright Hays Act, for example, has made the administration's budget hitlist each of the past three years. The Title VI language program is also a regular candidate for extinction. The International Education Act, which was passed in 1966, has yet to be funded. And the new and eyebrow-raising proposals called Project Democracy and Radio Marti both bypass higher education in favor of what can only be called direct propaganda. Consequently, it is hardly surprising that advocates of foreign student programs spend much of their time simply trying to stave off the fiscal wolves.

And while I admit that many of us who support international activities are, indeed, threatened by the fiscal wolves, I don't think we are paralyzed or incapable of making the type of decisions necessary in maintaining quality programs. Quite the opposite is true on many campuses. As Chairman of the American Council on Education's Commission on International Education, I have

found an increasing number of colleges and universities to be quite willing to undertake the tough choices and prudent planning that are critical to foreign student programs. The kind of planning many of us are trying and implementing is neither Pollyannish nor pernicious. It does not view foreign students as warm bodies to fill empty classrooms, nor does it wistfully assume that David Stockman will rediscover largesse in the immediate future.

Instead, the planning is characterized by creative policy analyses and examinations of foreign student programs. I know that on my campus alone, an incredible number of hours have gone into reviewing and reexamining the role and expectations of our international education and foreign student ventures. And I know that similar examinations and debates are being carried out at many of your institutions.

Admittedly, the discussions sometime become bogged down over definitional questions. What is international education? How does one categorize foreign student programs? Are American Abroad programs different from foreign student programs? What about faculty exchange programs? And most importantly, what are our objectives? But there isn't an academic department on any of our campuses that can avoid such periodic shakedown cruises.

Personally, I don't endorse a single definition of international education any more than I support a single role for foreign student programs. Such activities have more commonalities than differences. They tend to share common goals and common problems. If the overriding objective is to expand international awareness and understanding, then you need strong foreign language departments as well as foreign student offices; you need vibrant exchange programs as well as area studies departments.

Let's face it, we're multifaceted, eclectic, and maybe, to the pure scientists, we're not subject to easy compartmentalization. But even if we can't exactly define where international education begins and ends, and even if we haven't found a taxonomy scheme in which foreign student programs fit neatly, it doesn't mean that our activities aren't important or that we can't move on until we provide precise answers to general questions. Quite the contrary, the self-examinations that have taken place in any number of institutions have proceeded far beyond the definitional stage and have resulted in:

-- programs designed to assure a diversity of foreign student enrollments;

-- task forces on international education;

-- the expansion of foreign student support services;

-- improved language testing for admissions as well as for teaching assistantships; and

-- a variety of projects aimed at expanding the cultural awareness or the part of our campuses and the larger communities.

Such efforts alone, I admit, will not compensate for the lack of adequate financing. Campus task forces cannot offset the Soviet Union's enormous investment in international education, an investment that is four times greater than that of the United States. And programmatic reorganizations cannot substitute for the USSR's sponsorship of foreign students which is ten times greater than ours. But hopefully such efforts might narrow part of the gap, or at least allow us to tread water until we can persuade our leaders that international education and foreign student programs serve national interests just as much as MX missiles and B1 bombers.

Recently, in fact, there have been a few indications that we might be making new persuasive inroads not only into Congressional corridors but even into the Executive Branch. Several weeks ago, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, publicly lamented the fact that our efforts to support students from Costa Rica, Panama, El Salvador and Latin America in general were abysmal in comparison to the support provided by the Soviet Union. The consequences of not expanding our support, the Ambassador hinted, were ones that many of you could have predicted: We will lose the future leaders of Latin America and then we will lose the countries themselves.

An even more unlikely new-found ally is Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger. In letters to Secretary of Education Terrel Bell and OMB Director David Stockman, Weinberger recently wrote:

> "I am seriously concerned about the zero-funding of (the Title VI International Education) program and would urge you to consider restoring these funds at least to the 1983 level. My concern is shared by other officials within the Department of Defense and members of the academic community on whom we depend for both a solid research base in area studies as well as for production of foreign language specialists."

Now I doubt that any of us would ever have expected Mr. Weinberger to endorse both a restoration as well as an increase in funding, but folks, God sometimes acts in strange ways and we can only hope that the Defense Secretary keeps his new-found faith.

During recent weeks, there have also been some optimistic signs eminating from the Congressional Branch. Currently in the House, there are three bills which have either passed out of committee or out of the full House and which merit brief mention.

The first piece of legislation is part of the foreign assistance bill and would earmark $20 million in both FY 84 and FY 85 to finance scholarships for education programs in the U.S. Such scholarships are aimed at the concern expressed by Mrs. Kirkpatrick -- Latin America and the Caribbean -- and would certainly aid our initiatives in the foreign student arena.

A second proposal would authorize $50 million over the next three years to support foreign language instruction on the elementary, secondary, and post-secondary educational levels. Anyone familiar with the sad state of our foreign language competence knows only too well the necessity for such additional support.

A third bill would establish a $50 million endowment fund for advanced research and training in Soviet and Eastern European studies with some 40 percent of the funds being earmarked for fellowships, seminars, travel, and exchange programs. The need here is unquestionable, especially when you consider that the U.S. currently spends more money to construct a quarter mile of our federal highways than we do to support all of our exchange programs with the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact countries.

There is also, of course action under way on the USIA budgets, action which under the Senate's version, which is similar to the House's, calls for:

— $100.5 million for the Fulbright and International Visitors Programs. (This compares with the current continuing resolution level of $74 million.)

— $3.7 million for Humphrey Fellowships (as compared with the current $3.2 million level);

— $12.2 million for Private Sector Programs (as opposed to the current $7.1 million funding base);

— as well as $31 million for a program called the National Endowment for Democracy. This program is a substitute for the Administration's Project Democracy Program. Few people ever understood what Project Democracy was all about and only a few more people seem to have a solid grasp of what the National Endowment for Democracy will do. But it is to be a private, non-profit corporation and an entirely new initiative that combines the efforts of such organizations as the AFL-CIO, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and the Democratic and Republican parties in funding various international programs.

All in all then, there seems to be a growing realization that increased support for many of our activities is not only prudent, but downright essential. While the current Congressional proposals are not enough to fund our programs at desired levels, such initiatives, at least, represent a step in the right direction. And for programs that have been walking backward the last few years, any step ahead is cause for quiet optimism.

Thus, I am personally optimistic about the future of international education and foreign student programs. And I'm not particularly concerned about the criticism either from those who say we don't do enough or those who say we do too much. As any University president will admit, the sign of a good dean is one who can anger the faculty and at the same time have the Central Administration just as made at him (her). You might have your critics, but you're still doing a good job, and for that, I applaud your efforts.

Thank you.